

September 1993

People / Paul K. Sybrowsky

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (1993) "People / Paul K. Sybrowsky," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 5: Iss. 4, Article 25.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1418>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

An Interview with Paul K. Sybrowsky, President, Dynix, Inc.

Paul Sybrowsky has nine (9) children! In fact he sandwiched this interview in between running his company and sending one of them on a religious service mission! I told him I have enough trouble keeping up with my two (2) children. Had he read Cheaper by the Dozen? He told me that he had, but his were not cheaper, only. Here is what else he told me about his company . . .

ATG: Tell us about your background and how you ended up in the library automation business. What was your family and childhood like? Where did you go to school and what were your earlier jobs?

PKS: I was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. I left early on to serve in the military and to go to college. I graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in sociology and a minor in psychology (1968). Then I moved to Canada to begin a career in computer services. I guess I didn't take either the library route or the business route in college. But, once I was out of college, I worked with Automated Data Processing (ADP) to start their Canadian office, Dealer Services Division (1970), and that gave me a lot of experience. Later, I became General Manager for Europe Dealer Services Division of ADP (1976). I was responsible for starting dealer services in Great Britain and continental Europe. I lived in London, England, but I would get up in the morning and fly to Dusseldorf or Amsterdam and then back to London. It was a great job.

ATG: Why did you form Dynix? Explain its formation and your vision of library automation.

PKS: I worked with ADP for ten years. Then I moved to Provo, Utah and began my involvement with library automation. I worked for CTI Library Systems from 1980 to 1983. Then four of us looked at the marketplace for library automation of the 80s. We thought the technology was old and that there were efficiencies that we could capitalize on. I



had service training through my experience with ADP. We thought we could offer service training in the library marketplace.

So, on August 22, 1983, on the strength of \$200, four of us organized Dynix. We paid \$75 to the Secretary of the State of Utah to register the company and retained the other \$125 so we could spend \$25 per week in the evening to rent computer time from a local company. We worked through the night from 5:00 P.M. on. Two of the partners did the programming. We would also meet during the daytime to outline the values and principles of the company. We looked at the marketplace to see what was needed. We did a lot of strategic planning and system design in the daytime and the programming was done at night on the rented computer.

ATG: Who were your partners?

PKS: There were four people involved. **Keith Wilson** was the academic librarian and the designer of the system. He was on the library faculty at BYU-Hawaii campus in Laie, on Oahu. Keith was the only MLS. **Jim Wilson** was in charge of library automation at the BYU (Provo) library. Jim understood very well what a library needed in terms of automation although he was not a librarian. **Ralph Egan** was the other partner and a superb programmer. I guess I took the role of leader since I'd worked in the business environment in the past and had more experience. I've been President of

Dynix for 10 years now, but I didn't play a presidential role then. We were four young men working together, without pay, for a dream we all shared. In the early stages leadership was shared by all of us depending on the subject and the tasks that needed to be done. That is still how Dynix works today. All four of us are still with the company and work full time jobs. It's not our vintage to fight. We are very happy with what we have accomplished.

ATG: Tell us about the first systems you sold. What was it like? Did you have a party?

PKS: We didn't have the time or money to have a party. We sold the first system soon after we started the company (within the first two months) to Kershaw County in Camden, South Carolina. We didn't even have a system to demonstrate. We responded to an RFP about how the system would work and they took a giant leap of faith with us.

A few weeks later we sold a system to the Library of Iberia Parish in Louisiana under the same set of circumstances. Our first two contracts helped a great deal without question, but the library that really helped us develop our system was Murray Public Library in Murray, Utah. Murray was our first installation in November, 1983. We would design the system by day and work all night installing the system, making sure that things functioned the way they were supposed to. We were very busy, always very busy. My only regret is that we didn't start in a garage!

ATG: You've had a very full life for someone in your mid-forties. After nurturing Dynix and guiding its growth for ten years, do you still enjoy your work? Is it time to move on?

PKS: I have a good and full life. I love people and I love this marketplace. Plus, I believe that we are providing worthwhile services. This is an exciting place to be right now. As a small group in the information industry we have the ability to reshape how information is ac-

cessed and how libraries contribute to the quality of life of the people they serve. The excitement is overwhelming. Libraries and education are in an enormous revolution. With our large client base, and in partnership with them, Dynix is the leader. We're not alone, but we're on the map. We make it easy for the average person to get information. Thinking about the possibilities for this is wonderful.

ATG: How can you, in your lofty position, with all this information and technology at your fingertips, identify with the average person? Pardon my question, but I am wondering.

PKS: I am an average little person myself. One of Dynix's founding principles is that while we partner with the library, our real client is the patron. I still love my work because of that. It's really a pleasure to come to work every day. We have tremendous employees. It's not time for me to move on. Where I am is where I want to be.

ATG: Dynix is known for its young, dynamic, and innovative workforce. They install new systems quickly and provide terrific support. You've grown from four to 600 employees in ten years. What types of people do you hire? What qualities to you look for?

PKS: We are fortunate that this area of Utah Valley, Provo is the home base for several exciting companies — companies like Novell and WordPerfect, who are leaders. Because of this we have a tremendous opportunity to participate in a high-tech, service-oriented environment surrounded by young, dynamic and innovative people.

In recruiting, we look for people who will put customers and colleagues first, before themselves — we look for team players. You can tell in an interview. We look for competent and highly ethical people who we can trust with our clients and with our employees. I don't interview everyone who is hired, by any means. We have managers and leaders within the company who are best equipped to hire the people who will work for them. We have a fairly typical hierarchical organizational structure, two executive Vice Presidents and several managers.

ATG: What's it like expanding into

foreign countries? What are some of the challenges Dynix faces internationally? I've heard of recent successes in Hong Kong and Indonesia. How's the European marketplace compared to the United States?

PKS: Exciting, rewarding, and expensive. About one-third of our accounts are international. Because of my background with ADP, the decision to move into work internationally was not difficult. I had always done it. Foreign countries are hungry for the types of services we provide. We expanded into Canada first because it was fairly easy, with similar language and a fairly close distance. But Canadians are Canadians and they are different from Americans.

We're overwhelmed and delighted with our new accounts in Hong Kong and Indonesia. These will be flagships for us in Southeast Asia and will serve as a foundation for future growth. Working with people in other countries requires trust on both sides.

In terms of the European marketplace, a couple of things come to mind. Of course, there are the diverse languages and diverse competition. In Europe, every country is a separate and unique entity. We hire nationals of those countries to assist us in developing in-roads.

Dynix has systems in 31 countries and offices in 13. We are the most aggressive library computer company in our breadth of worldwide scope.

ATG: Tell us about computer expertise in Europe?

PKS: There's incredible sophistication of the marketplace over there. People are computer literate and in some areas they lead North America in accessing information. They are by no means backward. Eastern Europe has been deprived of the last 20-40 years of technology and innovation, but the people are bright, eager to learn, and ready to catch up.

ATG: What new Dynix products are on the horizon?

PKS: Successful companies don't sit still. We continue to enhance and refine our eleven major modules. The oldest Dynix modules — Cataloging and Circulation — are really fine-tuned and slick. We're very excited about new products in the areas of connectivity, PAC, and service management. Let me take a

moment to introduce each.

Connectivity products extend the reach of library users beyond the library. Using the Dynix DOOR or Directory of Online Resources, people can connect to all sorts of remote databases. Our products utilize open-system technology and recognize standards to deliver the goods. New Dynix connectivity products include CPU Gateways for directory management, Dial PAC, client/server applications such as Z39.50 and the Kid's Catalog. X12 ordering and invoicing, interlibrary loan module, Internet connectivity and network integration consulting services and network-ready workstations.

We're enriching PAC with specialized information resources such as journal citations and other locally loaded external databases, links to CD products community information, image databases where images are linked to PAC, online selection reviews, electronic publications, and full-text document delivery.

Our new service management products provide tools that increase the range of specialized services offered to patrons and increase staff productivity. Examples include self-service circulation functions and checkout stations, phone-in renewals, electronic notification systems, ADA workstations for the visually impaired with character enlargement or speech synthesis, checkout receipt printers, and Internet training. Subsidiary product lines are also addressing changing technologies. Dynix Marquis software is available for distributed processing in networked environments. Dynix Vista (formerly Citation Center) accesses information databases. We're busy in every area of library automation.

ATG: How does Dynix anticipate and handle new or emerging technologies, such as network needs and document delivery?

PKS: Libraries clamor for products that offer connectivity to the exploring world of electronic information — as well as ways to integrate this information with their local systems. In other words, once you've reached an electronic destination, what can you do with what you find there? Several products currently in development at Dynix deliver data not necessarily owned by the library, such as the Vista Citation Center. Library users will enjoy even greater opportunities to "shop" for information from remote libraries, database suppli-

ers, and information brokers.

Dynix has been particularly successful in creating a focus within the company for new products/services by creating several specialized groups. Dynix Scholar, for example, serves the K-12 marketplace. GeneSys handles family history databases. RetroLink does retrospective conversions. We've recently formed a network consulting group to provide specialized network consulting, designs, configuration, installation, and support of local area networks. The network group integrates "cradle to grave" network services and are close to client needs and new network technologies. These groups form, if you will, "mini-companies" within Dynix to create, define, develop and deliver their services. It seems to me that the local systems vendors like Dynix, whose organizational structure remains flexible and responsive to marketplace demands, will be the companies that survive.

ATG: What's your impression of librarians? How has their knowledge of, trust in, and desire for automation changed over the years?

PKS: Librarians are delightful people, wonderfully kind and diverse. I appreciate most of all their intense desire to serve and assist people in all areas. Early on, many librarians weren't very technically knowledgeable in the area of computers, but librarians have always understood the technical applications of librarianship. There's a marked shift away from librarians' early computer intimidation. They've embraced automation as a way of life and many absolutely excel at it.

ATG: What proportion of your accounts are public and what are academic? Is there a difference between the librarians in these areas?

PKS: Dynix has about 65% public library accounts and 35% academic. I don't think there's a difference in the mindsets of public and academic librarians. They are both very service-oriented and want to make sure that patrons have the opportunity to receive information in the most exciting and easiest ways. I think that the value systems of librarians are tremendous in that they want to make information free, easily accessible, and available to everyone.

ATG: What can you tell us about Dynix's financial condition?

PKS: Since our first full year of operation, Dynix has been a profitable company. That's an enviable record. We've always focused on serving clients more than the bottom line, and we always protect the bottom line through innovative growth and new products. Financially, Dynix is a healthy company because we are always reinvesting in product lines and new products for the growth of the company.

ATG: How has Dynix's 1992 merger with Ameritech affected the company and its customers? Why did you join Ameritech? What's your relationship with NOTIS, another Ameritech company? Do you compete for clients and development funding?

PKS: Ameritech is an outstanding strategic partner for Dynix. In education the goals of Ameritech closely match the goals of Dynix. Our approach to em-

"We were four young men working together, without pay, for a dream we all shared."

ployees at Dynix matches the approach at Ameritech. We believe that the emerging technology of connectivity is important to library companies in the future.

Ameritech is a telecommunications company that was originally part of AT&T. It is the regional Bell operating company whose principle marketplace is a five-state midwestern area. Ameritech is very interested in improving the quality of education and the quality of life, and they believe that Dynix, with its leadership position in the library marketplace, can contribute to and help achieve their goals.

In terms of numbers, Dynix and NOTIS are a small part of Ameritech. But we are key elements in Ameritech's goal of improving education and quality of life. Ameritech believes strongly in libraries. This is not a numbers comparison; rather it's about how the two library companies, Dynix and NOTIS, contribute to the total Ameritech goal. NOTIS and Dynix are colleague companies within Ameritech. We do joint development work, like on Z39.50, and we work

together to help realize Ameritech's goals. We have an excellent relationship with NOTIS. The Ameritech environment is a cooperative one. Dynix has kept its independence. The management of Ameritech say they bought Dynix because of the way the company was run and what the company was doing. They're contributing to our success.

ATG: How about your relationship with CARL? This issue of ATG also includes an interview with Becky Lenzini, President of CARL Systems, Inc.

PKS: Carl has done an excellent job providing *The Kids' Catalog*. Dynix believes that we don't have to invent everything. We occasionally partner strategically with other companies. We really like their product and we are proud to offer it to clients. When we saw *The Kids' Catalog* demo-ed at ALA, I contacted Becky right away. We had an agreement and were working together within thirty days.

ATG: Many libraries are moving beyond first- and second-generation systems to take advantage of new technologies. Others are upgrading their hardware. How does Dynix assist libraries in system conversions and migrations?

PKS: We believe that Dynix has an enviable method of system migrations and innovations. We have converted over 100 libraries to Dynix from other systems. Again, my service orientation has helped. We have a section dedicated to these activities. It takes detail and talent and we have taken the time to make it successful.

ATG: What can you say about needed interfaces, migrations, and innovations as they relate to the "middle guy or gal," such as the book vendor?

PKS: In the quest for growth and change, it will always be necessary for people to make changes and there will always be a few hardships. We're committed to and believe in active partnering with book vendors and serial vendors in making sure that we can cooperate with them. This isn't a competitive issue; it is a cooperative issue. But the real challenge is that we come at it with diverging technologies. It takes longer to get together to say how we are going to

communicate with "vendor x" and "vendor y." We are only one company and we must also cooperate with competitors. This support is for the good of the marketplace, but it takes time for us to design a system that handles it all. I believe that we are all doing a very good job of cooperating and that the library community has seen benefits and will see more. We may just never be through! It is an exciting project, but not one that can happen in a couple of days.

ATG: Summarize Dynix's success. How have you been able to develop a very small company, with modest origins in the howling desert of Utah, into one of the world's best library automation vendors?

PKS: Dynix's success is first characterized by a clear vision of what it wants to do as an organization. We have remained focused on that vision. In the process, we've had the privilege of finding and hiring outstanding employees who excel in customer service

ATG: Tell us about your new corporate headquarters in Provo. It's nearly finished? When will you occupy the new building and how long do you intend to stay there?

PKS: Our new corporate headquarters are just being completed and we will move in the beginning of December. The building has 100,000 square feet. Now, we occupy about 50,000 square feet in several locations. Our headquarters sits on a 7 1/2 acre piece of property in full view of the beautiful Rocky Mountain range and 11,700-foot Mt. Timpanogos. We have a total of 27 acres to build on so we even have considerable expansion and growth opportunities. Obviously, we have a sizable investment in the new building, and have no plans to leave the area. Eventually, we envision a "Dynix campus" with 4 or 5 buildings, a campus of information technology.

ATG: What do you do in your spare time?

PKS: Not much because I have little of it. Seriously, I do a lot of community service primarily related to education. I serve on several educational and economic development boards. I obviously spend as much time as possible with my

large family and we do a lot of family activities together. Life with nine kids is intense, without question. There are 3 girls and 6 boys, three were born in Canada, 2 in London, and 4 in Provo. The kids range in age from 3 to 24 and they are usually 2 or 3 years apart in age. We ski as a family (the kids are more avid than their parents). We also spend a lot of time in the beautiful mountains. Our location is a real plus for Dynix and growth. People want to live here. *Time* magazine recently did a feature on "Booming in the Rockies," an article on the six western states and why people move out here. I read the article the other night and nodded my head — "yep, that's why we're here."

ATG: What have you read lately that you can recommend to us?

PKS: I don't usually read fiction or science fiction. I like history and the classics. I like to read books that contribute to one's life. However, I recently read all of John Grisham's books and enjoyed them. I haven't been to see "The Firm." We don't have much time for movies. When we do go to a movie, we go as a family or rent a video as a family and watch family-type movies.

ATG: What's ahead for Dynix? For Paul Sybrowsky?

PKS: For Dynix — we want to continue to grow and contribute to the access of information. We're very excited about some of the things that we're doing and some of the unique products on the horizon. The real areas we are focusing on are connectivity and extending access to information beyond the library's walls.

One new product is the Dynix DOOR — Directory of Online Resources — which will allow connectivity to online databases utilizing open system approaches. We also will continue to enrich PAC and to provide service management products to assist libraries and library staff. Full-text document delivery is also on the horizon as a catalog enrichment.

For Paul Sybrowsky, more of the same. I want to keep working here with our employees and customers. It is a privilege to explore information possibilities together.

All in all, the future seems robust! ☺

Kluwer Academic Publishers announces a new service...

The Kluwer ftp Server

The new Kluwer ftp Server is a free service offering comprehensive information on Kluwer's electrical engineering and computer science related journals. The ftp Server enables you to retrieve a journal's **complete table of contents** - dating back to issue 1:1 - as well as the table of contents for forthcoming issues. Also available are aims & scopes, and ordering information. This service has now been extended to includes book previews, offering preface and table of contents.

The Kluwer ftp Server can be reached at the following address:

ftp world.std.com
login:anonymous
directory Kluwer/journals

The ftp Server can also be contacted using gopher.

For a complete list of files and their contents retrieve the file **INDEX**.

File Types

- *.toc file contains the table of contents of each journal.
- *.inf file contains aims & scope, and ordering information.

Should you encounter difficulties or have questions please contact:

North America:
Eric Maki
emkluwer@world.std.com

Outside North America
Martin van der Linden
vanderlinden@wkap.nl